

THIRD PLACE: CREATING A LIBRARY ENVIRONMENT THAT OPENS DOORS FOR COLLABORATION,
VALUE, AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

by

Tara M. Pennington

An Abstract

of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Education Specialist in Human Services Learning Resources
in the Department of Educational Leadership and Human Development
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May, 2016

ABSTRACT

by

Tara M. Pennington

Ray Oldenburg, in *A Great Good Place*, coined the term “third place” based on the idea of three spaces individuals usually occupy. The "first place" is the home; the "second place," the workplace; and third place, casual, neutral spaces where individuals come together outside of work and home (Oldenburg 83). This thesis addresses the creation of third place in a school library setting. The researcher surveyed students at a middle school in a suburban school district in the Midwest during the fall of 2015 to determine what students value as a third place in relation to their reading habits and to recommend to the researcher changes they think would improve the library space for teacher and student collaboration. The researcher found when third place is created in a middle school library setting, student usage of this space increases and student and teacher academic collaboration increases.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES.....	ix
CHAPTER 1: NATURE AND SCOPE OF STUDY	1
Introduction	1
Statement of the Problem	2
Purpose of the Study.....	3
Research Questions	4
Limitations of the Study.....	4
Definitions of Terms.....	5
Research Design.....	6
Conclusion.....	7
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	8
Introduction	8
Creation of the Third Place Library	8
Aesthetics and the Third Place Library	11
Creating a Culture of Value and Acceptance in Third Place Libraries	16
Collaboration in the Third Place Library	19
Creating a Place that Increases Student Academic Achievement	24
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	28
Research Plan.....	28
Setting.....	31

Participants	32
Materials and Design	33
Research Procedure	34
Data Analysis.....	34
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS.....	36
Changes Made After First Survey.....	39
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION.....	50
Demographics	51
Creating a Third Place School Library	51
Maintaining Value of a Third Place School Library	54
Student Usage of a Third Place School Library	55
Academic Collaboration in a Third Place School Library	56
Recommendations for Future Studies.....	57
Conclusion.....	58
APPENDICES	
A. Student Survey One	65
B. Student Survey Two	66
C. Group Discussion Questions	67
D. Google Form for Tracking Attendance and Collaboration	68
E. Parental Consent Form	69
F. Student Consent Form	71
G. Human Subjects Approval	73

H. Pictures of Purchased Furniture	74
WORKS CITED	60

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Number of Males and Females in the Study.....	31
Table 2: Reponses indicated by students in group discussion question 1	41

CHAPTER 1 NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Introduction

The idea of third place has become a popular buzzword in the world of library science. With the growth of the Internet, librarians are reconsidering how to attract and keep patrons and how to create an environment that can compete with places other than home or work. With budget cuts continuing in many school libraries each year, librarians are thinking outside the box about how to make a library space that is readily equipped to serve students' needs, from the latest technology, to ideas for collaboration, to a relaxing place to read a book. Librarians are looking to maintain the idea of a traditional library setting, yet with spaces readily available for students to co-create using the best resources available.

Researchers such as Skerrett claim that Oldenburg's third places can become a place of expanded and heightened learning for all involved (70). Librarians encourage collaboration with teachers and see student achievement reach greater heights when students are given the opportunity to have input on what makes a space comfortable and important in a middle school library. "Students and teachers no longer need a library simply for access. Instead, they require a place that encourages participatory learning and allows for co-construction of understanding from a variety of sources. In other words, instead of being an archive, libraries are becoming a learning commons" (Holland n.pag.). A learning commons can be quite similar to a third place environment. A third place in a library invites students to spend time there in addition to their places of work and home. A learning commons can mimic a third place and encourage learning and construction of ideas for all involved with this space. Learning commons is often a term used by librarians to define the space in their library that functions

with third place characteristics such as flexible seating, accommodating resources that meet patrons' needs, and equal access for all who enter the commons area. A learning commons in a library differs from a third place in a library in that it may not contain all of the characteristics of Oldenburg's theory. Some librarians will add more computer labs or reading spaces, even new furniture, and call it a learning commons because students will gather in the common space to socialize. However, a learning commons should contain thoughtful ideas on furniture and playfulness of décor, equal access to resources, and a sense of warmth in order to fit as a third place setting.

Statement of the Problem

According to Oldenburg, centrally located gathering places were among the first structures built in ancient civilizations. As American society has developed over the last half century, parental involvement at home has been on the decline due to work and personal responsibilities. The desire for children to have a third place away from the home where they can be comfortable and accepted among peers has become an important idea (Oldenburg "Toward Better Time and Places" section). Some middle school libraries do not take into account the desires of students to have a third place that is welcoming, inclusive, and includes up-to-date décor that is not pretentious. Students often want a space in an academic setting that feels like a trendy hangout. In the late 20th century, big chain bookstores like Borders and Barnes and Noble discovered the value of incorporating third-place comforts. As some of those bookstores closed, the school library has become a destination for users of this type of third place. With curriculum changes, students need an area where they can complete projects assigned by their teachers. They might have to work together on a Google Doc or create a

presentation using Microsoft Office 365. Students need a third place where they have access to many resources and technology and the opportunity to work independently and together. Housing the resources they need in a third place environment within a middle school library is where many librarians are moving in regards to library design implementation and programming.

This study investigates the creation of third place in a middle school library setting and how this can increase student usage of the library and academic collaboration for students and teachers. The creation of third place in a school library takes into consideration the aesthetics of the space and evaluating the needs of patrons as is discussed in the review of literature in chapter two. This thesis will present the implementation of a third place in a middle school library.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the creation of third place in a middle school library and determine if student usage and academic collaboration among students and teachers increases in this place. The researcher conducted a review of literature to determine how librarians are thinking about and presenting library spaces to their patrons. Particular attention was paid to how a third place school library is created and the resources needed for librarians to attract and meet the needs of patrons. The researcher surveyed current middle school students to investigate what makes a space feel comfortable, inclusive, and encourages collaboration in a library setting. The researcher also conducted a group discussion to determine if third place was successfully created in the middle school library setting. This thesis

seeks to understand if the creation of a third place library will increase student and teacher usage of the space and increase collaboration between students and teachers.

Research Questions

The data collection portion of this thesis focuses on what functionality and aesthetics students feel are important in creating a third place within the school library. For the review of literature, the researcher looked at how third places have been created in other facets of society, the aesthetics incorporated in third places, and the value of third places in regards to academic collaboration of students and teachers in these spaces. The following questions guided this research, investigating the idea of third place and how the librarian created it:

- 1) How can third place be created in a middle school library?
- 2) How is the value of third place maintained in a middle school library?
- 3) How will students use a third place in a middle school library?
- 4) Will allowing students to design a third place in a middle school library increase student and teacher usage of the library space for academic collaboration?

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of the study include the following factors. The review of literature was conducted in the spring of 2012 and the fall of 2015. Because the idea of third place in libraries is a fairly new concept, a limited number of journal articles and texts from professional individuals was available. To overcome this limitation, the author sought a range of resources, including journals, articles, blogs, and books discussing third place in the library environment for a school setting.

The research was conducted within a short time frame within a school semester. The entire study took place between mid-October through December, 2015. In response to this limitation, the author had participants in the study complete two surveys, one in November and the second in December, 2015; then, one group discussion was held to determine if the creation of a third place in the middle school where the study was being conducted was successful.

Another limitation of the study was the short time frame in which the author was able to track visits to the middle school library in which the study was conducted. Visits were only able to be tracked in the months of November 2015 through January 2016. The researcher used a Google Form to track this data. A limitation to visit tracking was the researcher could not determine if the teachers and students were coming to the library due to an increase in curriculum needs or to use the new library furniture.

An additional limitation is that the results are based on student responses from one middle school in a suburban district in the Midwest, and the study is limited to a small group of students' thoughts and reflections. This study serves as an analysis of the effectiveness of the creation of third place in a middle school library in relation to academic collaboration and student acceptance in and of the space.

Definition of Terms

Collaboration-- Collaboration is a trusting, working relationship between two or more equal participants involved in shared thinking, shared planning, and shared creation of innovative integrated instruction" (Montiell-Overall "A Theoretical" 32).

Third place-- Oldenburg calls one's "first place" the home and those that one lives with. The "second place" is the workplace — where people may actually spend most of their time. Third places, then, are casual, neutral spaces where individuals come together outside of work and home (Oldenburg "The Character of Third Places" section).

Learning commons—The American Library Association defines this as a collaborative physical and virtual environment that invites and ignites participatory learning (Loertscher and Koechlin E5).

Research Design

The review of literature collected previously published information pertaining to the creation of third place in school libraries and how this encourages collaboration, enhances value, and improves student academic achievement. The researcher accessed Quest Library Catalog from the University of Central Missouri's James C. Kirkpatrick Library (JCKL) website.

Online databases were the primary sources cited. These databases were accessed from the JCKL website. Articles were retrieved from two databases, *Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts* and *Library Literature & Information Science Full Text*. Search terms included "library and third place," "third place and societies," "collaboration and librarians," and "student academic achievement and libraries." Free websites were accessed by the researcher. The free Web resources were reviewed by the researcher for authorship, accuracy, date of last update, and other common measures of reliability to determine if they should be used by the researcher.

Conclusion

This study explores the creation of third place libraries, how librarians are creating cultures of value and acceptance in third place libraries, collaboration in third place libraries, and creating a third place library that increases student and teacher academic collaboration. Chapter two is a review of the literature exploring third place in many settings, including libraries, and how librarians strive to create spaces that promote collaboration and academic achievement among students and staff. The current study investigates whether creating a third place in a middle school library setting will increase student usage of the library space and academic collaboration among students and teachers. The methodology for this study is located in chapter three with the results in chapter four. Chapter five discusses the implications of the results of the study and provides answers to the research questions posed in chapter one.

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

School librarians are pushing to make a mental shift, discarding the traditional concept of library space as space for books, transforming library space so that it attracts and keeps patrons and increases student and teacher collaboration. The mental shift for librarians stems from the growing popularity of the Internet and students needing a collaborative, comfortable space with access to valuable resources. It also stems from librarians and teachers seeing the value in collaboration and seeking an appealing space surrounded by resources where they and their students can meet and push toward greater academic achievement. This mental push describes the new way librarians are thinking about and presenting library spaces to their patrons. This thesis explores the creation of third place libraries and how librarians are creating cultures of value, acceptance, collaboration, and increased student academic achievement.

Creation of the Third Place Library

This section will explore the definition and idea of third place and how third place libraries attract loyal patrons by creating a welcoming environment. The term “third place” was coined by sociologist Ray Oldenburg in his book *The Great Good Place*. Individuals usually occupy the first place of home and the second place of work, both taking up large amounts of time. Humans naturally look for a more impersonal space where they can socialize and relax. Oldenburg claims the casual environment is the natural habitat of the third place (Oldenburg, “Toward Better Times and Places” section). This third place is a public place that offers social regeneration—a place where individuals can feel “at home” and exercise the freedom to

express themselves. It is a place that is used and that feels warm and inviting (Oldenburg, “The Character of Third Places” section). It is also a place that is not pretentious in the form of its décor and encourages others to feel comfortable and abandon any social pretense (Oldenburg, “The Character of Third Places” section).

Third place can exist in almost any facet of society. Teachers might try to create third place in the classroom as a safe place for both students and the teacher to critique each other academically and to experience the freedom of self-expression (Schapiro 435). The third place becomes an added resource for the teacher to use. In a classroom third place, the teacher helps students reach new levels of personal growth and exposes them to various forms of cultural differences and social situations while at the same time giving them a place to feel safe and to collaborate together.

The third place becomes a place of expanded and heightened learning for all involved (Skerrett 70). For example, elementary school teacher Ryan Flessner decided to use the theory of third place as a resource in his classroom. He noticed that many of his students did not know each other and were reluctant to share their thoughts or work together in groups. The comfort level was not present in this traditional classroom setting, and Flessner found himself doing all of the talking with no participation from his students. It was his desire for students to feel comfortable enough in his classroom that they would begin making connections between math in the classroom and how it can relate to real world applications. He worked with fifth grade students to perform a case study in which he hoped to create a third place that his students would adapt to. He encouraged them to share their work and cultural differences in a safe and respectful manner to develop trust in each other. However, the study results showed that the

students were able to enact the third place idea more organically than Flessner ever imagined. The students felt comfortable enough among themselves to instigate mathematical problem solving in small groups. They formed their own third place in the classroom by bringing in their own cultural and life experiences to share with others in a safe environment to creatively develop problem solving in math groups (Flessner 439). Flessner only had to provide the students with the place to create this environment.

The idea of third place can be extended beyond the classroom walls and into the world of science. It is a concept that finds its niche in many aspects of societies and cultures. In Malawi, scientists are studying sustainability in nature through talks with indigenous tribes. They are creating a third place atmosphere in a school where tribesmen feel comfortable negotiating and sharing with the student scientists in this area. The scientists have created a third place environment in a building in which the environment beckons the tribesmen to make themselves comfortable. No harsh language or demeaning attitudes are harbored towards the tribesmen, so they feel valued enough to share their opinions. The first place is made up of their cultural identities, the second place is where the Western ideas are brought to the school for talks about sustainability, and the third place is a physical area for tribesmen and student scientist to negotiate their beliefs and theories. These scientists and tribesmen have created a third place where they come together and collaborate with their topics at hand (Glasson et. al. 128). Both Oldenburg and Doug Johnson claim that this place is vital for healthy societies to thrive, and Johnson suggests that a “third place” is important for libraries and librarians who wish to stay relevant (n.pag.).

Aesthetics and the Third Place Library

Librarians embracing the concept of third place are changing the face of the library in order to meet user expectations. James Elmborg explains that libraries fill a traditional role in our culture of being an absolute space that is powerfully organized, much like a cathedral or temple (345). From the highly systematic ways many libraries are organized to the stereotypical shushing of many librarians, it has proven to be very difficult for some to make this mental shift towards creating a third place atmosphere in the library. This can make it difficult to prove to the outside user that twenty-first century libraries are not the normal, stale environment many individuals may have grown up in. Elmborg explains that what makes a library efficient can also make users feel controlled. For instance, when users step into many libraries, signage explains who is designated to be in certain areas, and whether or not food, drink or talking is allowed (345). Many librarians use this type of control to encourage a structured and systematic way for users to access the library. Some users thrive on this type of organization and systematic approach. However, because users of library places are changing their expectations, librarians are faced with the challenge of changing the atmosphere toward a third place approach with fewer constraints. Libraries are shifting towards more outward approaches than just offering books and a space to read them. According to Yanchus, “libraries have evolved beyond simply being a source of books. It’s a place where you inquire about things, work together to solve problems. You’re learning about media and using digital technology and all those things come together” (n.pag.).

This is especially true for teen users. Bolan focuses on how teen users have different expectations of how the library space should be used compared to how their parents might have used libraries. Bolan explains, “During the last 10 years, many librarians have transformed their young adult areas into more efficient, innovative, and inspirational spaces” (44).

According to Holland, “The libraries of the 21st century provide a welcoming common space that encourages exploration, creation, and collaboration between students, teachers, and a broader community. They bring together the best of the physical and digital to create learning hubs” (“From Library to Learning Commons”). Teen and adult users often need a collaborative space where they can feel connected both personally and physically. Third place here is really the idea behind such learning commons in libraries. In a recent blog found in *Knowledge Quest*, Hannah Byrd Little acknowledges she has been designing her school library learning commons on the idea of third place for the past eight years. Little states third place is “that place where you ‘hang out’ with friends, collaborate with colleagues, it is a place to go and meet for quiet discussion, or friendly debate” (n.pag.). The philosophy of many librarians concerning learning commons in school libraries are loosely based on the idea of third place, whether the librarians intended to follow this formula or not.

Additionally, computers and Internet access are vitally important in creating a third place library. This added feature in a learning commons within a library is often the only life line some students have with the Internet. Providing computers helps students accomplish their needs that might otherwise go unmet in a different setting. For example, students might have to fill out forms on the Internet—like college and scholarship applications, and many of them do not have Internet access from home or work (Breeding, 30). The librarian who creates

a welcoming third place takes these factors into consideration when planning to meet student needs and expectations.

Research indicates that once librarians create third places, they tend to use aesthetics to attract and keep users. Librarians who have adopted the third place mentality, such as creating welcoming environments that students and teachers would want to inhabit, have not thrown out all of the benefits of how a library is organized. Instead, they have kept the backbone of how a library is traditionally organized and used aesthetics to make the space more appealing to their users. Elmborg explains, for example, how many of the major chain bookstores have capitalized on creating spaces to entice their users to relax and interact with books (339). These bookstores have used lighting, comfortable seating, coffee and food choices, space to socialize with peers, and books to keep their customers returning. Librarians have noticed that today's students and teachers have come to appreciate a comfortable place for them to enjoy books and each other.

Library users want to avoid the almost hospital-like feel of some libraries—with the fluorescent lights and stark atmosphere, claims Elmborg (339). Users who enjoy bookstores often enjoy the smells, sights, sounds, and space of them. They like being able to move furniture around, socialize with others about books they are reading, and hold meetings in these places. In *The Great Good Place*, Oldenburg mentions that aesthetics (such as warmth, familiar faces, and accessibility) play a vital role in the creation of third place and the importance individuals place on these spaces ("The Character Third Places" section). Librarians creating third place in their libraries are taking into consideration these aesthetics, much like the bookstores, in order to keep patrons coming through their doors.

Heeger explains that teens and students need physical spaces much like the bookstore has to offer. It is apparent that this generation of students has a deep need for socialization, evidenced by their use of virtual social sites like Facebook. Heeger argues that third place options are becoming limited for teen students; and thus, it is important for libraries to provide the type of atmospheres teens want to occupy. However, she explains that many libraries have updated their spaces to become a third place for students, but they are still not able to keep their users. These library spaces might attract students in the beginning, but the librarians are not able to keep their customers due to the staff not tolerating this age group of students. Heeger encourages librarians to think about their staff and if they are able to fully support the third place ideas (27). It takes appreciation for this type of place and clientele in order to help it run successfully.

Furthermore, if librarians are using aesthetics to create third places and keep users coming back to their libraries, then the discussion turns to how librarians are taking on a more business-minded approach to creating and promoting this product called third place. Elmborg explains how librarians are consistently told they should run their libraries more like small businesses (339). With the Internet the biggest source of competition for librarians, like all good business owners, librarians should market this third place idea to keep their customers coming back for more.

An example of this marketing technique is discussed by Gallo. She has been a teen services librarian in a public library for more than 10 years. She worked at a bookstore for six months before she became a librarian and learned about what it looks like to hook readers in a created space and keep them coming back. This is very similar to how school librarians must

hook their students in a third place setting and keep them coming through the school library doors often. Gallo mentions that spaces for displays are what hook readers and make them want to linger. The displays will draw students into a third place area and increase circulation if they are done correctly. For example, interesting displays, Gallo explains, contain humor and creativity and will keep students returning to see what will be next (32). Creating a display of the latest graphic novels to come into the collection might attract that reluctant reader and make him or her return to the library looking for more. Displays that contain holiday themes or new releases by favorite authors will attract students by using high interest materials for the displays. School librarians are building relationships with their students and piquing their interest by using relevant displays and the hottest titles to keep their students returning to the library again and again.

Furthermore, in regards to the collection and its enticement, the students want to successfully find the materials they desire to read on the shelves. Mardis explains, when students look for material on shelves, the signage should be clear and easy to use, and the librarians should provide the right amount of supportive finding aids instead of hovering over students (“Reflections”i). The right amount of support in a third place library includes interesting signage to direct students towards the correct call numbers for popular book sections. Students reported wanting to feel independent in their search for finding supportive material for school or personal work (Mardis “Reflections”ii). The right amount of support means librarians have not only provided all the tools for a student to independently find the book on his own but also, as approachable librarians, have provided a place in which the

student felt confident asking for help in locating a favorite book if needed. All these factors come into play when creating a third place that encourages user success and retention.

Overall, aesthetics and friendly staff are what make the third place library different from other libraries. When patrons are able to access movable furniture, when lighting creates a sense of ambiance and warmth, when displays showcase interesting books, and when computers to access the Internet are available, students will want to come back for more. The third place library experience is comparable to entering someone's home that feels warm and inviting and beckons you to kick your feet up and stay awhile. If the host or hostess is hospitable and the environment is enjoyable, people will want to visit often.

Creating a Culture of Value and Acceptance in Third Place Libraries

Librarians have discussed, in various publications, the methodology for creating, marketing, attracting, and keeping students coming to a library. Few, however, discuss how to create a culture that values this third place in libraries. This section will explore how libraries have traditionally held value in cultures, how a library's collection can create a sense of value, how students identifying with a space can create value, and how acceptance spreads when students find value in a third place library.

Elmborg reflects that cultures create spaces and places that hold value for people. These places become valuable based on what people in that culture deem important, and the space is then managed by these values (343). Focusing on the creation of a third place, Elmborg recommends that librarians change libraries into "socially meaningful institutions with a higher role and calling" (349). Libraries have always held value in societies, much like cathedrals did in medieval Europe. Melville Dewey predicted the library would be an essential

part of every progressive community because it housed the best of mankind's recorded knowledge (Grossman 105-106). An enticing and extensive collection is one way librarians create a sense of value for their patrons. A third place library presents itself as a space where students and teachers feel comfortable and at ease to work and where the librarian is a guide to direct adventures. The third place atmosphere provides a link between the collection and the user with the librarian there to guide the way (Elmborg, 346). Learning and projects go as far as the participants can take them when the librarian functions as a guide to all the material in the library. In a third place library the user will feel able to approach the librarian with questions. This approachableness brings a human interface to the collection by librarians discussing their favorite reads and helping users find just the right book. By offering the collection to the patrons in this way, librarians are creating a sense of value for the third place library.

Furthermore, the library is a center, the hub of a school, in which students and teachers talk to each other and use the available resources (Lin, Chen, and Chang, 342). This brings in the second point of how, when students identify with a space such as a third place library, they create value for the library. Lin, Chen, and Chang mention how third places make students feel at home when welcomed by staff and enticed by and comfortable with their surroundings. They believe that students who feel at home will be better motivated and learn more efficiently. Students feel socially welcomed when surrounded by friendly staff willing to help them learn (343).

No longer can a library be just a place to check out materials; it is a place that students identify with. Mardis has followed the blog reports of researcher Nancy Everhart, 2011/2012 president of the American Association of School Librarians (AASL). Everhart traveled to many

schools, observed students, and asked them the questions, “Is this library my kind of place?” and “Can I be successful here?” (“Reflections” ii). When many students first enter a library space, they want to feel connected to it. They are searching for warmth of space and staff and if the place holds any interest or connection for them. This generation of young people is aware of their carbon footprint, and most feel a sense of responsibility for the environment. If a library environment mimics the students’ belief systems in some way, they are more likely to identify with this place and call it their own. Mardis reports that often students want to see recycling bins, easy access to technology, an area that is free of clutter, and which has comfortable furniture that invites socialization and collaboration for homework or projects (“Reflections” ii). Students are looking for a place to call their own.

Lastly, when students feel they have a space to call their own, such as a third place library, they are more willing to accept those around them in this cultural place of value they have discovered. Students need a safe place in their school to feel welcomed and accepted in order to explore self-development skills (Johnston and Bishop, 2). The third place school library has become just this place for many students. The more students feel connected to a place personally, the more they are apt to have meaningful learning experiences (3). Students who feel isolated in other school settings, such as sporting venues or other social events, can often find solace and acceptance in a third place library’s inviting atmosphere (4). They can socialize with other students with similar personalities and can develop a sense of acceptance and tolerance for others’ interests. In general, third place libraries can obtain a sense of value and acceptance from students through the collection and the attitudes of the librarians. Students can identify with the space, feel accepted into the place, and therefore, welcome others.

Collaboration in the Third Place Library

Once the third place library is established, and the school culture finds value in this setting, collaboration is the next natural occurrence. This section will explore how the third place library provides a comfortable space for building teacher and librarian relationships that encourage collaboration, how the library can act as a supportive hub for the school, how collaboration can take place between the librarian and the community, and how collaboration creates a positive display of teamwork for students. The library as third place also invites networking among teachers and librarians.

Patricia Montiel-Overall provides a definition of collaboration between teachers and the librarian, stating, "Collaboration is a trusting, working relationship between two or more equal participants involved in shared thinking, shared planning, and shared creation of innovative integrated instruction" ("A Further Understanding" 32). Before collaboration takes place, generally a minimal relationship must be developed to begin this working partnership. Third place libraries provide a place that invites this type of networking among teachers and librarians by providing a setting where it is comfortable and practical to meet and by hosting resources that are accessible to all users.

Montiel-Overall mentions that trading shared interests and goals is essential in building the trust relationships necessary to work on projects together ("A Theoretical Understanding" 30). She explains that shallow forms of networking in education can begin around the drinking fountain or while waiting in line with students at lunch time, but there is a need for deeper partnership ("A Theoretical Understanding" 30). Third place libraries provide a welcoming atmosphere where this deeper connection and higher-level thinking and planning can take

place between teacher and librarian. Montiel-Overall explains how several participants mentioned the need for a comfortable, convenient place to meet for collaboration. Having meetings off site often resulted in frustration due to parking and teachers being tired at the end of the day (“A Further Understanding” 45). A third place library provides an ideal setting for this type of collaboration due to the convenience for both teachers and librarians. Montiel-Overall also explains how few educators see the librarian outside of a traditional role. She explains that many educators lack understanding of how a librarian can collaborate with them for curriculum instruction and to plan higher-level thinking projects for students (“Further Understanding” 32).

Montiel-Overall discusses how teachers working in isolation in classrooms are becoming a thing of the past. Teachers are still mostly teaching in isolation within their classrooms but are planning with the school librarians to deepen their lessons. The need for teachers and librarians to work together to create student-centered learning environments is becoming increasingly important (“A Theoretical Understanding” 25). Teachers and the librarian are feeling added pressure to incorporate Common Core Standards into their various teaching environments. The third place library is an ideal setting where this type of teamwork occurs, and students benefit from teachers and librarians working together to plan engaging lessons that teach information literacy skills. It is a place that encourages academic engagement to its fullest when colleagues come together and are able to share resources from their fields of expertise to benefit student achievement.

In a case study conducted by Montiel-Overall and colleagues, observations were made over the effect of science teacher and librarian collaboration teaching information literacy skills

to Latino students in grades 3-5 (“A Further Understanding” 34). The teachers and librarians were to put together professional workshops for other educators to attend regarding how to present the science curriculum to Latino students the following year. Data were collected during the collaboration meetings, and the levels of collaboration among teachers and librarians were noted. Montiel-Overall reports that initially teachers did not understand what collaboration meant or what it should look like. The librarians gave several examples of what a typical teacher and librarian collaboration looked like. Many teachers did not know that the librarian’s literacy standards were deeply rooted in core curriculum standards. It took much planning, demonstration, and collaboration for the participants to fully grasp what true collaboration between the teacher and librarian should look like. The librarian created a third place that allowed the teachers to feel comfortable working together within the learning commons of the library. The philosophy of third place was important in this study, because it helped the teachers feel comfortable within the library space and to be able to freely collaborate with the librarian and train other teachers to do the same.

If the atmosphere of a third place library is inviting and welcomes networking, the teacher and librarian work together to establish clear goals and be successful collaborators in building high-achieving lessons for students. The librarian and classroom teacher work together as a team to vertically integrate information between grade levels and between subjects in order to increase student learning experiences (Purcell 32). An example is when the Common Core Standards being taught in the classroom are extended for deeper learning in the library setting. If a school librarian has taken the initiative to set up a learning commons area using the idea of third place, this naturally opens the doors for collaboration and co-teaching

experiences. The result is a rich learning environment that would not exist if the librarian and teacher worked alone in separate learning areas. Hare and Ryberg explain that often teachers feel isolated from adult professional interaction (12). The library can serve as a third place setting in which teachers and librarians interact.

The third place library not only provides an excellent environment to support collaboration between teachers and the librarian, but it also provides a supportive meeting place for student clubs and various community advisory boards. As the hub of the building, this third place offers a multifaceted program to the entire school community. For example, librarians might invite students to use the third place in the library to host their monthly book clubs (Price 15). The librarian could set up a schedule for snacks, find bibliographic information on the author of the book of the month, and provide the books. In addition there is no quicker way to help students feel ownership of the library than to get them thinking and talking about things to implement in the collection and design of the library. A third place librarian invites these discussions to occur in a comfortable setting within the library such as a reading nook or a space with flexible furniture. In 2014, the Cooperative Education Services (CES) in Fairfield County, Connecticut, implemented a two year process for re-imagining the school library into more of a learning commons with some characteristics of a third place atmosphere. Eighty educators were involved from fourteen school districts representing one hundred thirty-three different schools. The program had a goal of re-imagining school libraries to house a variety of learning spaces, makerspaces, and quiet reading areas. Since the induction of this program, school libraries involved have seen a twenty percent increase in circulation of books and a three hundred percent increase in collaborative instruction with teachers and librarians (Kompar 23).

Next, collaboration can be extended and encouraged beyond the school walls and into the community. As mentioned, the library as third place becomes a safe haven for students. The librarian uses his research skills to investigate what type of community exists beyond the school's walls and extends this community into the library. Johnson and Bishop found that a student will identify with a library space if she feels welcome and is able to identify with how this space reflects her interests and how it pertains to her life. This is only accomplished by examining the community (5). Geographic Information Systems give librarians the ability to analyze the demographics that surround their library. Bishop and Johnston mention that this is a tool used by many community developers around the world (5). The information gathered with this research tool is also used to manage collections within the library to further help students identify with the library as a third place (Johnston and Bishop 5). If the students have books available that suit their interests and reflect their culture and community, they feel accepted and are more willing to come back due to a feeling of warmth and acceptance. Bishop and Johnson further agree that it is "necessary for [librarians] to learn about the community and the various environments their students come from" (Johnston and Bishop 6). Students become more engaged in the collection if it reflects their interests and more involved in the programs offered by the library if they know thought has gone into understanding them as a society within the school's culture. The design of the third place library encourages the use of space for social interaction like this, collaboration between all members of the school community, the creation of ideas, and great learning experiences (Lin, Chen, and Chang 339).

Creating a Place that Increases Student Academic Achievement

Third place libraries encourage user success but also increase student academic achievement. This section will explore how students benefit from third place libraries when shared knowledge between teacher and librarian creates dynamic purposeful planning and learning. It will also explore how students with special needs benefit from a third place library.

In a study from the University of Michigan, researchers looked at various studies representing third place in a traditional classroom setting and its effect on content area literacy (Moje, Ciechanowski, Kramer, Ellis, Carrillo, and Collazo). They examined multiple Latino and Anglo students over a five-year period in school settings. These researchers observed how students bring different levels of knowledge from different discourse areas of their lives. In discussing this idea, Moje et al. claimed, "Such a third place is important because it provides opportunities for success in traditional school learning while also making space for typically marginalized voices. Indeed, each of the studies...has demonstrated both increased academic engagement and learning gains" (44). The students felt more comfortable when they were able to share their cultural traits with fellow students. These students finally felt they had a voice among others. The researchers concluded that no matter the setting of the third place, whether in a classroom or a library, students benefited through the shared knowledge they felt comfortable bringing to this type of setting from different discourse areas of their lives (67).

Furthermore, in the third place library, teamwork is modeled between teacher and librarian to improve student learning. When teachers and librarians are collaborating, students benefit by seeing adults consult, compromise, make decisions, have conflicts, and then resolve them (Hare and Ryberg 12). As students see successful teamwork taking place among adults,

the same results are modeled by students as they bring in various background knowledge bases to the third place setting and collaborate on teacher-led projects.

Kenedy and Monty take a deeper look at collaboration in third places and discuss how critical skills are developed in students when faculty and librarian collaborate to produce dynamic, purposeful learning. They developed a project over several years. The students at various grade levels had contact with the librarian throughout the study, and the librarian and faculty member worked together closely to develop assignments. They staged assignments throughout the course in order for students to receive constant feedback from the teacher and librarian. When given course evaluations, “The students consistently reported that information literacy sessions [with the librarian and teacher] enhanced their learning and increased their capabilities as researchers” (Kenedy and Monty 117). Although this level of collaboration would not be possible with every classroom teacher in a school, when it is possible, this research demonstrates that student academic learning will be increased.

Anderson points out that school librarians are “naturals at presenting the world’s best literature and using it as a springboard to teaching the curriculum and supporting the components of the reading initiative,” whether that initiative is Accelerated Reader, Scholastic Reading Inventory, or the teacher’s incentive program to get the students reading more (22). Librarians are able to work in partnership with classroom teachers in bringing the best literature to the curriculum. Even non-readers become engaged with a text and increase their success with the help of the school librarian and a third place setting where they linger and read. Anderson claims that having a valuable collection of fiction and non-fiction materials in many formats reaches every student (22), even those at higher education levels.

Finally, the topic of third place would not be complete without observing how students with special needs are accommodated in the library and how their academic success increased in such places. The library provides a wealth of technology in a third place area that helps special needs students be more successful than in the standard classroom setting. Winter, a special needs teacher in Georgia, collaborated with the librarian in his building to seek guidance in finding books and websites that would be helpful to his students (38). Winter claims that many students with disabilities struggle to navigate the library, even if it is a welcoming environment for them. Some special needs students struggle with organization and get distracted by due dates and research skills (38). Winter focuses on collaborating with the librarian to create a more welcoming virtual third place for his students. Winter and the librarian utilized free graphic organizers online that helped his students stay focused. They also added special starter pages and widgets to the library website's home page that help students read texts (38).

The library home page helps build a third place for special needs students outside and within school walls. For Winter's project, the home page provides tools for students and teachers to collaborate together. Winter imagines the ultimate third place library emerges from a positive partnership between special needs faculty and the librarian. Such collaboration breaks access barriers in the library for special students and their self-esteem increases (39).

In conclusion, evidence from research points to the many benefits of creating a third place within the walls of a school library. From an increase of student clientele to a boost in teacher and librarian collaboration, which increases student academic success, third place

libraries are becoming part of the twenty-first century aspect of librarianship. When librarians embrace this mindset of third place, users reap the benefits of such a setting.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

Research Plan

This chapter will begin with a discussion regarding the data gathering tools used by the researcher in this study; such as surveys, a group discussion, and a Google form. Next, the researcher will describe the setting in which the study took place, followed by a description of the participants in the study. Finally, the materials and design of the study will be discussed, as well as the procedures used for the research plan and how the researcher analyzed the data gathered from the study.

The main purpose of this study is to investigate whether third place can be created in a middle school library setting. This study will also look at how beginning a third place setting can increase student usage of the library and academic collaboration between students and teachers. The researcher designed two surveys to gather input from middle school students in a middle school library within a suburban school district in the Midwest. The two surveys, consisting of five questions each, were given to student participants. The first survey, located in Appendix A, asked student participants, (1) what kind of furniture they would add to the learning commons area of the library, (2) what makes them feel comfortable in a library setting, (3) what their favorite spot to read outside of school is, (4) if they could choose one thing to add to their middle school library what would it be, and (5) what else might be done to improve academic collaboration between students and teachers in the middle school library. Questions one through four, in the first survey, gathered information about what students value in a comfortable space and what they would like added to their library to make it feel more comfortable and warm. Since Oldenburg places much emphasis on aesthetics in a third

place, the researcher was seeking to understand what makes a comfortable space for students and where they typically find this place outside of school walls. Question five, in the first survey, was developed for the researcher to understand what ideas students had to improve collaboration among students and teachers in the library and if these ideas could be used to encourage collaboration, particularly in the third place setting.

A second survey, found in Appendix B, was then given a few weeks later to collect student responses to the changes made to the middle school library space. The second survey asked student participants (1) if they liked the newly added furniture in the library and why or why not, (2) if students felt comfortable in the school library and why or why not, (3) if they noticed more students using the school library since the items were added, (4) if they could change one additional thing about the school library what would it be, and finally, (5) if they thought academic collaboration had improved between students and teachers since the space was created. Questions one through three of the second survey were developed to tell the researcher if the idea of a third place in a library setting was successfully beginning to take shape. Since Oldenburg places much emphasis on the warmth, accessibility, and mood of a third place setting, the researcher needed to see if students were feeling those characteristics of the space in the library. The positive results from these questions told the researcher if third place is beginning to be achieved in this particular library. Also, responses to question four of the second survey informed the researcher if additional changes need to be made in order to keep attracting patrons to this third place setting. Finally, responses to question five told the researcher if students view the third place in the library as a setting where increased collaboration has occurred. The answer to question five was compared to data from a Google

Form the researcher used to track if increased collaboration occurred. The results will be discussed in chapter four of this paper.

Additionally, the researcher conducted a group discussion with the study participants after the first survey was given. The discussion, with specific questions located in Appendix C, was conducted to determine whether a third place was successfully beginning to form in this middle school library. Student participants were asked to discuss whether they felt included in this space, whether they felt they were able to build relationships with students and teachers in this space, whether the space felt warm and used, if the décor was approachable and not pretentious, and if the space was accessible and accommodating. The questions were modeled after the section in Oldenburg's book, *The Character of Places*, which covers a summary of the aesthetics important in a third place setting. The researcher felt that student responses to these questions shed light on whether third place was successfully beginning to form in this middle school library.

Finally, a Google Forms sheet, located in Appendix D, was used by the researcher to track attendance of students and teachers using the newly designed space during the months of the study, November and December, 2015. The form asked the date the student used the library space, the number of students estimated in attendance in the library during the class period, and the purpose for the students and teachers using the library. The researcher entered all the information into the Google Form each day during the two months of the study. The results indicated to the researcher whether attendance increased in the library after the changes were implemented and whether the space was being used for collaboration between

students and teachers. The results provided further information as to whether the creation of third place was successful.

Setting

The setting of this study was in a middle school library within a suburban school district in the Midwest. The participants attended an after-school book club. For data collection, student participants took two surveys, printed out on paper provided by the researcher, during the after-school book club meetings between November and December 2015. To participate, students needed a signed parental consent form (Appendix E) and a signed student assent form (Appendix F). They also needed a writing utensil and working space in the library to complete the surveys. The survey contained five content related questions but no demographic questions. No greater risks were associated with the study than those encountered in daily performance of routine physical, psychological examinations, or tests. Responses from the survey were kept confidential at all times, and all surveys and data collected and recorded were properly destroyed or deleted after the study was completed.

For additional data collection, the researcher also conducted a group discussion with these student participants, with specific questions listed in Appendix C. The setting of this group discussion was at tables in the middle school library during the after-school book club in December 2015, one week after the second survey was given to student participants. The group discussion was audio-taped so the researcher could later transcribe the student responses from this discussion and compare the results with how students responded on the written surveys.

Participants

Participants targeted in this study were middle school students in a suburban school district in the Midwest, ages 11 through 13, in the fall of 2015. The middle school has a population of approximately 900 students and participants from the study were selected from an after-school book club. No attempt to develop a sample of participants that reflect the demographics of the entire school was made. The goal of the survey was to acquire an accurate representation of what the participants valued in a middle school library setting and ideas they shared for collaboration among teachers and students within the library space. Therefore, qualifying participants were between the ages of eleven and thirteen and were currently enrolled in the middle school where the study was held. No high school or elementary students were surveyed as this study solely focused on a third place setting within a middle school library. The researcher surveyed seventeen students from the after-school book club. The student members of this book club were both male and female. Of the seventeen students that participated in the study, no students with cognitive impairments were specifically targeted for this study. Also, no compensation or incentives were given to students for taking part in this study.

The University of Central Missouri's Institutional Review Board, or IRB, granted approval for the study. The IRB approved a full application for human study on November 6, 2015. The approval letter is located in Appendix G.

The study did not measure the demographics of the participants beyond their age and gender. Each participant was a voluntary member of the after-school book club and a voluntary participant in the study. Participants from the book club took extra time during the meetings to

complete the two surveys and participate in the group discussion following the surveys. The researcher selected this after-school book club due to the importance of the library for these students and their involvement in the library programming thus far. The parental consent form inviting these students to participate in the study is located in Appendix E along with the student assent form located in Appendix F. All names of students were kept confidential during the survey submitted to the researcher. Table one provides information regarding the breakdown of the participants from the study. The names of the participants presented in the discussion in chapter four are pseudonyms to protect the participants' identities. When the researcher refers to particular participants, the students will be called by pseudonym names. The researcher decided to use pseudonyms to keep the content of the students' answers confidential.

Number of Participants in Study—Table 1

Number of Participants in Survey 1	Number of Participants in Survey 2	Number of Participants in Group Discussion
17	17	14

Materials and Design

Participants received a parental consent form and a student assent form from the researcher inviting them to participate in the study. If parents or guardians gave consent and the students were willing to participate, participants were able to complete the two surveys and participate in the group discussion. No teachers or parents were asked to participate in the surveys or group discussions. The group discussion was audio-taped so the researcher could transcribe the students' responses to the questions asked by the researcher. The discussion

related to how effectively the newly decorated space functioned as a beginning third place in the school library after the first survey was taken by students and initial changes to the school library were made. The questions for the group discussion are listed in Appendix C. The group discussion was transcribed in order for the researcher to compare and contrast the students' verbal responses in the group discussion with the written responses from the two surveys.

Research Procedure

Participants in the study completed the two surveys between November and December 2015. The first survey was given in November 2015. The researcher recorded the answers from survey one and made decisions regarding which décor to add to the library based on the responses from this survey. After changes were made to the library décor, survey two was given in December 2015 to gather feedback from the study participants regarding the added décor. After survey two was turned in by student participants, the students from the after-school book club gathered for a group discussion the following week. Also a Google Forms sheet was used by the researcher to track usage of the library third place area during the months of November and December 2015 and January 2016.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data, the researcher collected responses from each survey turned in from participants. The researcher then put the responses from each student into a spreadsheet to look for common themes that emerged. For instance, if most of the students answered from survey one, question three, that their favorite spot to read outside of school is in a comfy chair or a comfortable spot in their homes, the researcher would record "comfortable seating" as the emerging theme for this question. The researcher listed the most common themes from each

question as they emerged from the surveys. The responses from the two surveys were compared to the data collected from the transcribed group discussion in order for the researcher to see if the responses shed light on the overall question of whether progress was being made towards establishing a third place in the library. By looking at data from both the surveys and the group discussion, the researcher is able to compare and contrast responses, both written and verbally. The data collected from the Google Form by the researcher were also used to analyze whether library visits and collaboration increased in the new library setting between the months of October 2015 through January 2016. A limitation of the study is that other factors that may have affected library attendance were not taking into consideration.

Chapter 4

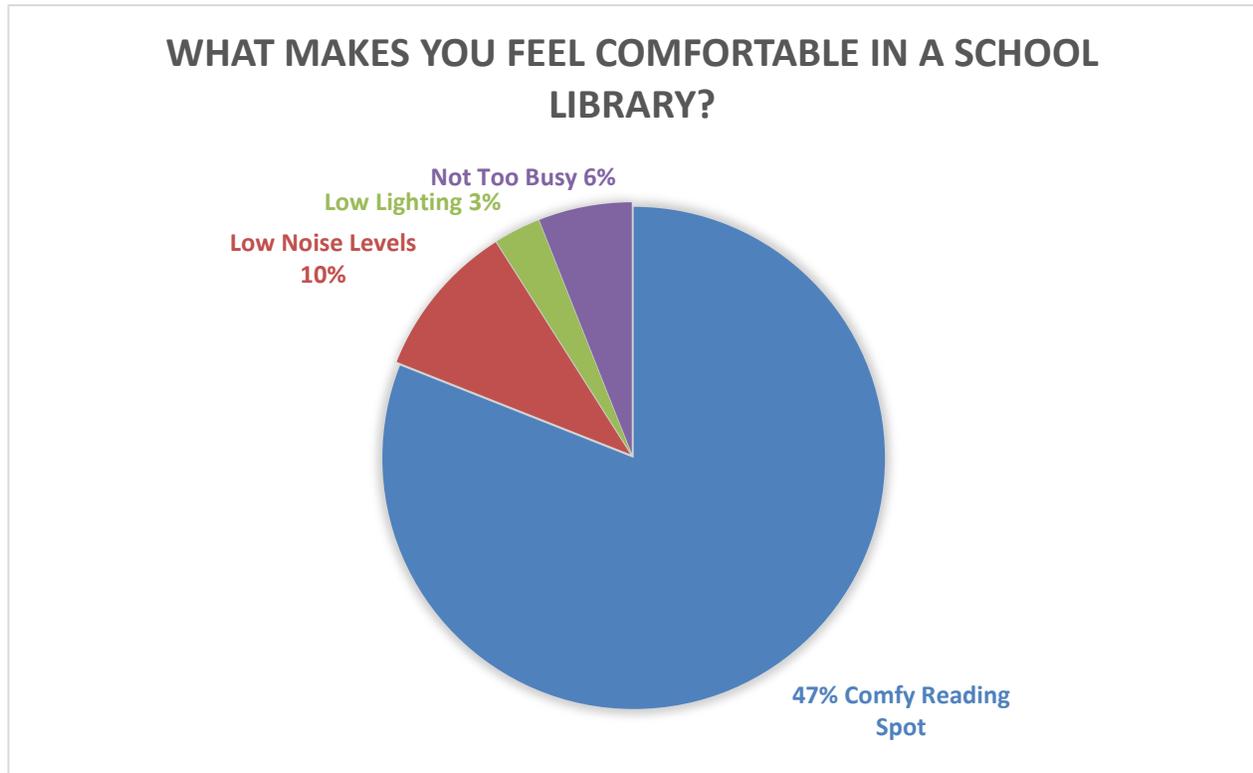
Results

This chapter will discuss students' responses from each of the tools the researcher used to collect data. These tools include two surveys, a group discussion, and a Google form. The findings will also be presented in graphical form in this chapter. Seventeen students returned the parental consent forms and student assent forms to participate in the entire research study. These same seventeen students participated in both written surveys. In the group discussion, fourteen of the seventeen students participated. Although the book club attracts 25 or 30 student participants, the lower participation number can be explained with students not returning their parental consent forms and student assent forms in a timely manner or some of the students simply losing track of the paperwork between school and home. The researcher created pseudonyms for students (such as Sarah or Zach) when transcribing the group discussion or mentioning the results for this chapter.

The first question from survey one asked the participants to write down which kinds of furniture they would add to their library. Of the seventeen students that participated, one student reported a bungee chair, one student reported more books instead of comfortable furniture, two students reported couches, and thirteen students reported some type of bean bag chairs.

The second question from survey one asked the participants what makes them feel comfortable in a school library. The results varied for each student based on how each student determined the meaning of comfortable. The researcher grouped the results together based on similar terms students used to describe their ideas of comfortability. Figure one below shows that more students responded with "comfy reading spot" and a "not too busy

library setting” had the least amount of responses. Of students that responded to question two, 47% [N = 8] said a comfy reading spot makes them feel comfortable in a school library; 35% [N = 6] percent said low noise levels; 12% [N = 2] said not too busy of a library schedule; and 6% [N = 1] said low lighting helps them feel most comfortable in a school library.



Most students will readily talk about their favorite spots to read. Question three from Figure 1 Responses to question 2 concerning what makes a student feel comfortable in a school library.

survey one asked students, “What is your favorite spot to read outside of school?” Figure two shows 47% [N = 8], found their room or their bed to be their favorite spot to read. Twenty-nine percent [N = 5] of students claimed a favorite chair was their favorite spot to read, eighteen percent of students [N = 3] stated they liked to read outside, and six percent [N = 1] of students claimed a reading nook area. As seen in this graph, many students value their bedrooms for a sense of privacy.

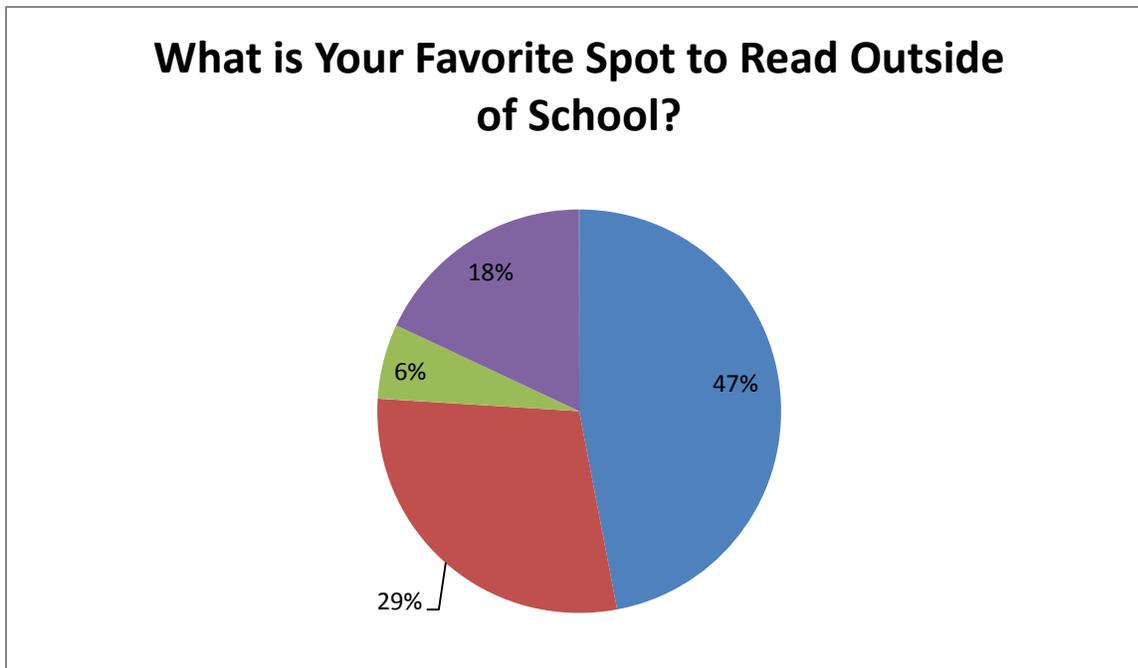


Figure 2 Responses for question 3 regarding students' favorite spot to read outside of school.

Question four of survey one asked students if they could choose one thing to add to their school library, what would it be? Eight students reported they would add more books, four students reported they would add bean bags, and two students would add more couches. One student recommended more posters to promote books, and two students asked to bring their personal pets so they could read with them.

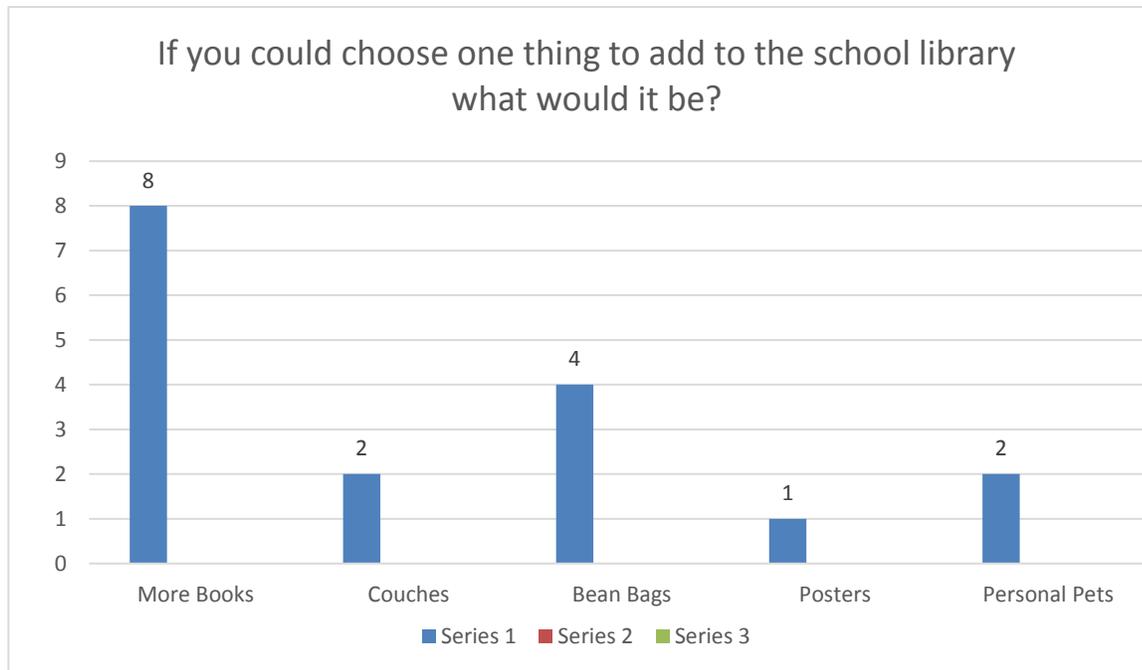


Figure 3 Responses for question 4 about if students could add one thing to the school library, what it would be.

The final question for survey one asked students what else might be done to improve collaboration among students and teachers in the library. The researcher discovered in this first survey that students didn't seem to understand the meaning of the term collaboration. The answers varied widely with one student commenting that a space with posters could be added as a student/teacher area and another student commented that two teachers could just be available for questions. Overall, of the seventeen students that responded to this question, only one seemed to be on topic by replying "adding a conference area for students and teachers to meet together." The researcher determined that this term should have been defined on the survey in order to get more authentic responses for this question.

Changes Made After First Survey

After the researcher took into consideration the responses from students from survey one, new furniture was purchased to try and create a third place setting for students in the

library. The pictures of the purchased furniture are included in Appendix H. Two club chairs, a loveseat, and four stools were purchased for the area. Bean bags were not considered as an option, even though several students suggested them for the library, due to administration of the school not supporting this purchase. The stools were chosen instead of the bean bags, because they contributed to a playful atmosphere in place of the bean bags. The decision regarding to not allow pets into the library was due to a district policy already in place before this study. Furthermore, new books are constantly added to the collection in the school library, so the researcher did not consider this suggestion as a new purchase to add. Several students mention the funny posters in the following sections. The posters were original additions to the library put up by the librarian at the beginning of the school year and not a part of this study. However, the researcher included the comments from the students in the group study to show how students thought the posters supported the atmosphere of third place.

The students who participated in the study were then gathered for a group discussion in December 2015 to record their reactions to changes made in the school library setting. The group discussion consisted of fourteen students. The participants' responses revealed that progress is being made toward a third place setting in this particular school library. Changes made by the researcher, responses from students, and the increase to usage of the space compared to previous months support this progress.

Question one of the group discussion asked students "When you visit our school library, do you feel a sense of warmth? Feeling a sense of warmth in a space would include feeling comfortable, 'a home away from home,' and cozy." All students names are pseudonyms. A

table has been provided to demonstrate the responses of some participants that answered this question during the group discussion.

<i>Student Pseudonym</i>	<i>Phrases contributed by students in responses to group discussion question 1</i>	<i>Seen by researcher as indicating a sense of warmth</i>
Zach	"Comfortable furniture allows me to feel relaxed and able to stay as long as possible"	yes
Hope	"Feels comfortable and cozy"	yes
Sarah	"Feels like my favorite reading spot"	yes
Ben	"Doesn't feel as comfortable as my bed"	no
Terry	"I still feel like I'm in school"	no
Landon	"I feel right at home now"	yes
Tom	"It makes me want to curl up and read a good book"	yes

Table 2 Responses indicated by students in group discussion question 1.

Zach said that he couldn't feel as cozy or warm in the library as when he's in his own home, because it's still a school setting. He did comment that "The funny posters and the comfortable furniture do allow me to feel relaxed and able to stay as long as possible in the library to read" (group discussion Dec. 2015). Hope said she feels comfortable and cozy with the new furniture. She said she often likes to read in a big, bouncy chair in her living room, and this new furniture reminded her of that. She said her home is often noisy, so she likes coming to the library to

read when it's not very busy (group discussion Dec. 2015). Of the fourteen students that participated in the group discussion, the researcher concluded that based on their responses, 92% [N = 13] of students felt a sense of warmth when visiting the school library, based on the new additions.

Question two of the group discussion asked students "When you visit our school library, do you feel like the furniture is low profile? Is it plain enough in design so that it feels approachable and not pretentious? Pretentious means when something feels important or having dignity or feels fancy." Hope reported that the color of the new furniture was important to her. She felt that "if the furniture was white I would be worried I would spill something on it, or it would be too fancy for me to sit on" (group discussion Dec. 2015). All the students in the group discussion concluded that the color of the furniture and the texture of the fabric were important in determining if the furniture felt low profile or pretentious. Sarah liked the color of the furniture and felt it would be easy to clean, which in turn made her feel more comfortable using the furniture as much as possible (group discussion Dec. 2015). Overall, the students concluded, by way of stating "yes" to the question or mentioned in the quotes above, that the choice of the furniture was low profile enough and would feel approachable to most students in the middle school library.

Question three had the most varied responses from students in the group discussion. Students were asked, "Do you feel the mood of the décor is playful and cheerful—not too much like a classroom?" Figure four displays the various responses from students in the group discussion. Amy concluded that even though the posters were funny in the library and the

comfortable furniture had been added, she still associated it with school and every setting felt like a classroom situation to her due to the rules enforced in each area. Ben stated that the mood of the décor was cheerful because the posters were funny, the decorations were kid-friendly, and the library staff was nice and helpful (group discussion Dec. 2015).

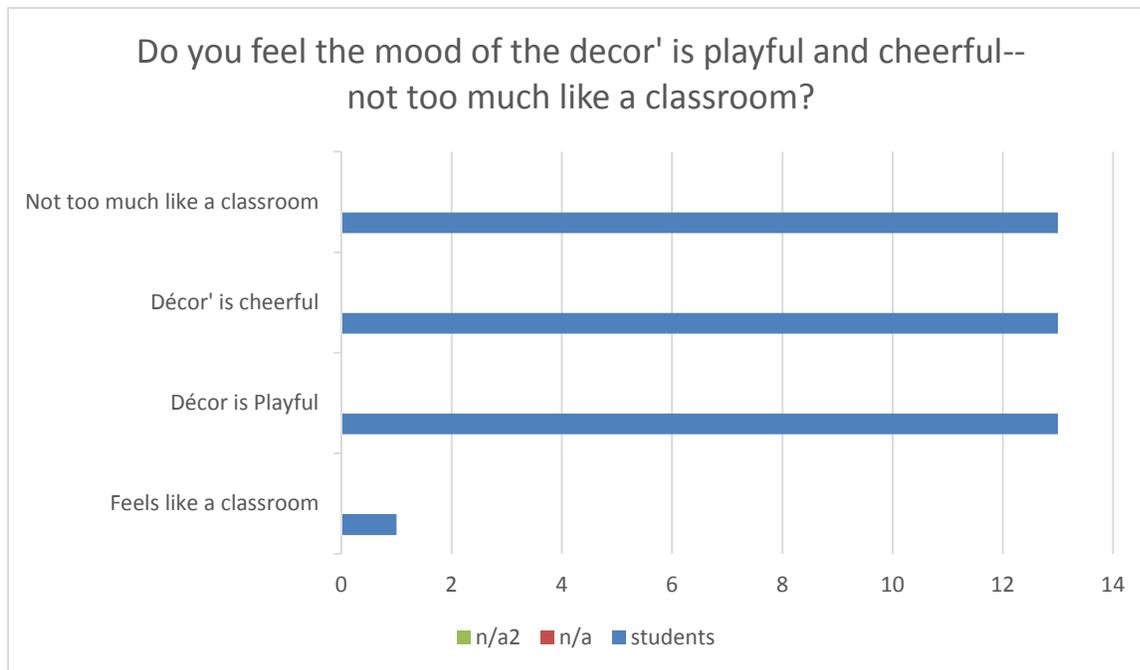


Figure 5 When you visit the school library, do you feel the mood of the décor' is playful and cheerful--not too much like a classroom setting?

Question four in the group discussion asked students, “Is the library accessible and accomodating for your academic needs? For instance, do you take advantage of extended hours and resources provided to you as a student? Do you use the tables and chairs to work on projects?” Every student in the group discussion answered yes to this question. Hope stated that even though she doesn’t always have homework and need the library’s resources, she has come into the library to use the tables to work on posters for clubs or share a snack during book club (group discussion Dec. 2015). Zach mentioned he didn’t have access to the internet

at home, and so he has used the library's resources to finish online math homework during the library's extended hours after school and before school. Each student participating in the group discussion had used the library's computers, books, and table and chairs.

The researcher used a Google Form to track usage of the library space and its resources before, during, and after the research study. The researcher tracked visits to the library from October 2015 through January 2016. The visits included teachers who signed up to bring their classes to use the library resources as well as students who walked into the library alone to use resources or the new furniture in the reading nook areas. A trend was observed for the entire middle school population, including students who did not participate in the research study. The approximate number of visits tracked by the researcher in the month of October 2015 was 3,100. The researcher estimated these numbers based on class sizes reported by teachers when signing up to reserve class time in the library and the number of visits tracked by the Google form when students would sign-in to the library during these months. By January 2016, the approximate number of visits tracked by the researcher had increased to 4,700. Roughly 1,600 more visits to the library were reported in January than in October, previous to any changes being made to make the library setting more like a third place. The limitation of this study is that the increase in attendance cannot be proven to be due solely to the addition of new furniture. The researcher could not track whether the increase in attendance was driven by curriculum needs versus teachers and students wanting to use the new library setting.

Question five in the group discussion asked students, "Do you feel you are able to build relationships with students and teachers while using the library?" This was an important part in

Oldenburg's view of third places—being able to socialize and feel comfortable in an area other than home and work. Student answers to the group discussion revealed that overall they felt they were able to build relationships with other students and teachers when given the opportunity to use the library space. Each student from the group discussion either answered yes to this question or gave a direct quote as mentioned in this section. Terry commented that the library, with its changes, felt like a commons area where he could talk with friends. He mentioned that in sixth grade the only time friends have a chance to talk is in the cafeteria where it's sometimes too loud or passing time in the hallways if they can find each other. He says that in sixth grade, with no recess time available, it is nice to have an area of the school where he can sit and talk with friends or work on projects or homework for classes (group discussion Dec. 2015). Allowing the students to use this library place during the school day can help them build collaborative relationships with their peers. Another student commented he likes talking with one of the speech and drama teachers in the building while the teacher reads newspapers. Zach stated, "When I see Mr. Brown (pseudonym) reading the newspaper in the library reading space, I like to come over and sit with him and talk about which musical or play the school will perform next" (group discussion Dec. 2015). Many students nodded their heads in agreement and mentioned they like it when their teachers come and sit with them on the new furniture. Sarah felt it made the teachers seem more approachable when they could relax in an area that wasn't their classroom and talk about books or what's happening around school. This is very similar to Oldenburg's descriptions of third places in a society where fathers used to bring their sons to country clubs where they would all interact socially in the same places.

Finally, the researcher asked in question six, “Do you feel you would be able to successfully collaborate on a project with other students or teachers in the library?” All fourteen students responded yes to this question as long as they were given the time during the school day to come down and utilize the library space and resources. Students wanting to work in a collaborative space other than the classroom seemed to be the trend with all students involved in this group discussion. Every student responded they would be able to collaborate with other students or teachers better in an environment like the library’s new space than in the classroom with typical desks and chairs. Hope responded, “I feel more creative in a space like the library and its comfy furniture to be able to work on a project. I also feel like my teacher would be more relaxed in this space rather than just working at her desk in our classroom” (group discussion Dec. 2015).

The final step in gathering student responses for the research study was to complete survey two. After students completed the group discussion, the following week they were given survey two to complete individually and anonymously. The same seventeen students who completed survey one also completed survey two.

The first question in survey two asked students if they liked the furniture added to the school library and why or why not. Ninety-four percent of students [N = 16] responded they like the furniture. The only student who responded against liking the new furniture made the comment he wished bean bags would have been added to the library instead of chairs. Other students responded they liked the furniture for various reasons such as “it’s pretty,” “comfy,” and “nice colors.”

The second question in survey two asked students “Do you feel comfortable in the school library? Why or why not?” All students responded they felt comfortable in the school library. They had various reasons for feeling comfortable, such as “the staff is friendly and makes me feel welcomed,” “the new furniture makes me feel relaxed and the library feels friendly,” and “I feel comfortable in the library even if I have a lot of research to do.”

Question three asked students “Do you notice more students using the school library since we’ve added the new items?” Figure five shows the students’ responses to this question.

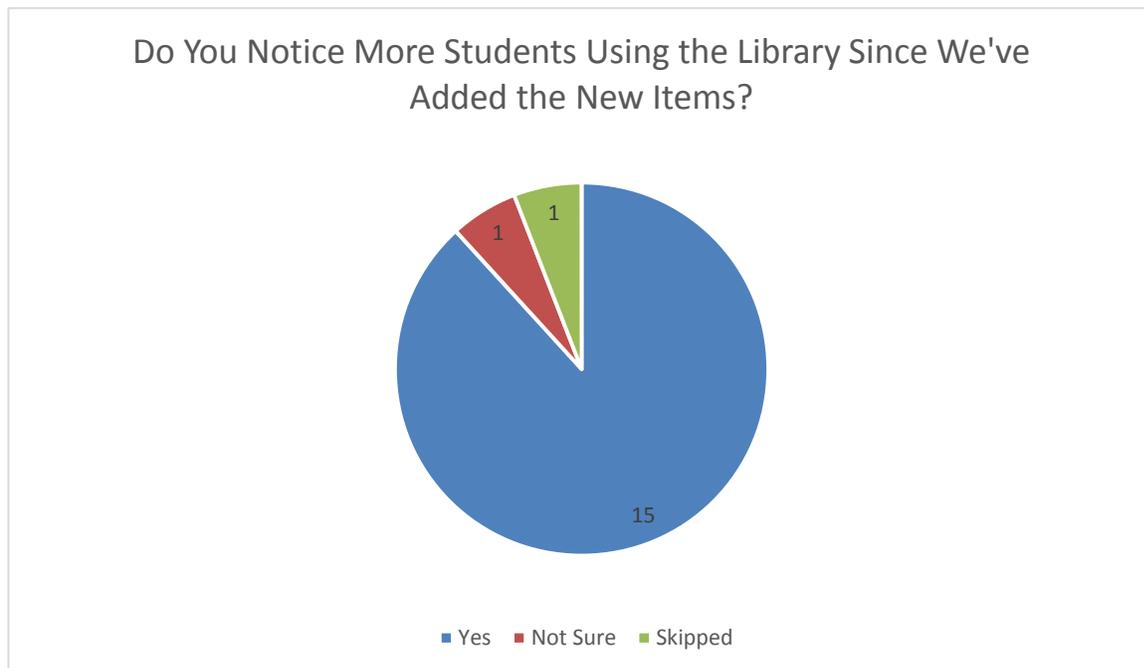


Figure 6 Regarding if students noticed the updated library space being used more by students and/or staff

Fifteen students agreed the library space was getting used more often, because they felt they had to ‘save their spot’ for a chair or stool as soon as they entered the library. These students claimed that before they just walked into the library and didn’t care if they got a chair or had to sit to a table in the library. Now, since the new furniture has been added, they feel

everyone wants a chance at sitting in the updated area because it's a favorite new spot for their friends. One student claimed he wasn't sure the new library space was getting used more, and one student skipped this question.

Question four asked students what's one thing they would choose to add to the middle school library. Even though animals weren't discussed at all in the research study, two students thought it would be a great addition if they could bring their personal pets to the new library reading area. Eight students responded with food and drinks as an addition, which the researcher might consider in the future to create even more of a third place area in the library.

Figure seven shows the responses to this question.

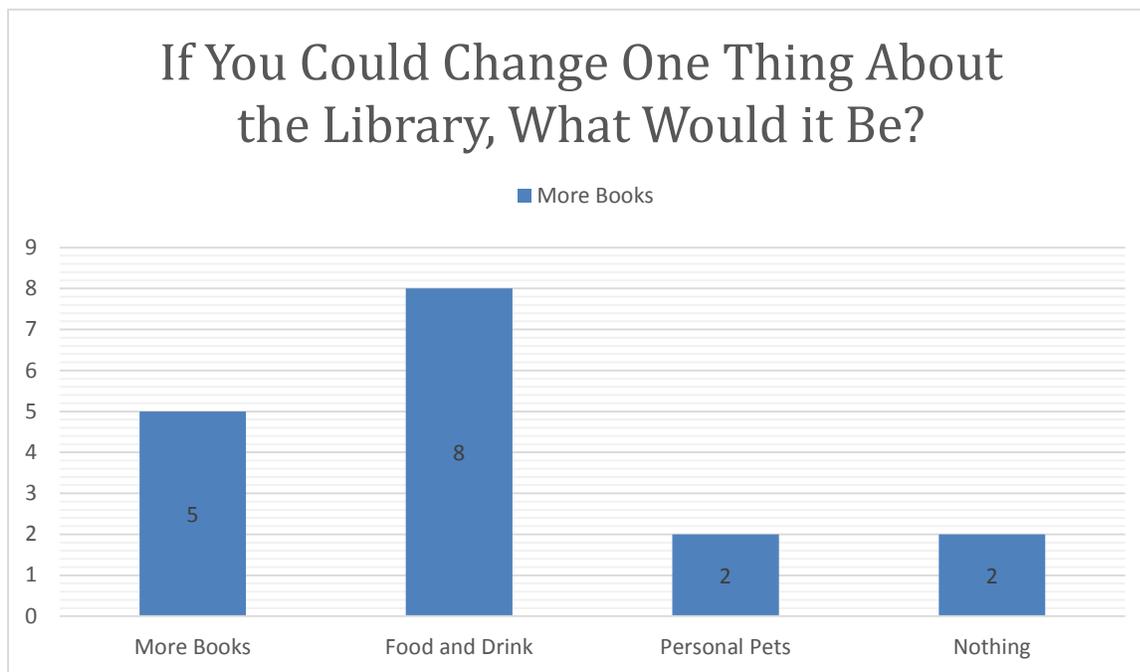


Figure 7 Regarding what students would add to the library

Finally, students were asked in question five if they thought collaboration has improved in the school library between students and teachers. Eight students answered yes due to their teachers signing up to come down to the library more for research and checking out books. Four students weren't sure if collaboration had increased since they typically only visit the library with one or two teachers during any given week in school. They stated the new library space seemed busier, but they weren't sure if more teachers and students were able to work on projects or not in the new library space. Five students said their teachers liked the new space and wanted the librarian to help with more projects and allow students to get to use the new furniture in the library.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

Many school librarians are redesigning or repurposing their libraries to become more usable places. Third place libraries hold value in being places where students and staff will frequently visit to collaborate on academic projects or spend time reading and socializing. Third places provide expanded and heightened learning for all involved (Skerrett 70). Third places must be accessible to those who choose to occupy them and they must meet the needs of individuals in order for them to return. This study sought to discover libraries as third places, how they can increase student and staff usage of such places, and how they can increase student academic achievement. This chapter will discuss the following research questions:

- 1) How can third place be created in a middle school library?
- 2) How is the value of third place maintained in a middle school library?
- 3) How will students use a third place in a middle school library?
- 4) Will allowing students to design a third place in a middle school library increase student and teacher usage of the library space for academic collaboration?

In this chapter data collected from two surveys, a student group discussion, and a Google form for tracking visits to the middle school library by teachers and students will be discussed and compared to literature reviewed previously in this research paper.

Demographics

This study was conducted in a suburban middle school library in the Midwest and involved participants in an after-school book club. Seventeen students participated in each of the two surveys. The group discussion resulted in fourteen students participating.

Creating a Third Place in a School Library

Many libraries are becoming less traditional and some are moving towards creating third places. Students and teachers require places where they can access a multitude of resources and learn by participation and collaboration (Holland “From Learning to Library Commons”). Students long for a place where they can feel a sense of belonging among peers and feel comfortable enough to return time and again (Oldenburg “Toward Better Times and Places” section). This thesis sought to understand if the creation of a third place library will increase student and teacher usage of a middle school library and increase collaboration between students and teachers. A review of literature was conducted regarding aspects of third place in libraries and other facets of societies.

The researcher asked participants from an after-school book club to participate in this study. Students from the book club took time during meetings to answer questions from two surveys. Each survey asked open-ended questions about opinions regarding the current library space and participants’ personal reading space preferences, as well as collaboration practices among students and teachers in the building. The first survey occurred in November 2015. The researcher then made changes to the library décor following data gathered after survey one. A second survey was given to participants in December 2015 to record student opinions on the

new library décor and whether an increase in collaboration among students and staff was occurring in the library. This second survey was followed by a group discussion. The goal of the group discussion was to record student responses as to whether they agreed with the choices of aesthetics added to the library and to gauge if progress was being made towards successfully creating a third place in this library. Data from this study show that 47% [N = 8] of students prefer to read in a comfortable spot in their bedroom and if a library place is structured to be comfortable and inviting, such as a favorite reading spot at home, that students will begin viewing such a library as a third place setting resembling Oldenburg's theory.

Third places, in the form of centrally located gathering spots, have been around since ancient civilizations existed (Oldenburg "Toward Better Time and Places" section). Many teachers have even educated themselves on Oldenburg's theory and created classroom atmosphere's to resemble third places in order for their students to build personal relationships so more organic learning and collaboration could occur (Flessner 439). Students enjoy places where they feel comfortable and accepted, much like their personal bedrooms at home. If teachers and librarians can mimic these feelings of comfort and acceptance in classrooms and libraries, then third place is being created. Fifteen of the seventeen students from survey one of this study reported they would like to see more comfortable furniture, bean bags, and couches added to their school library. This feature of libraries was more preferred than adding additional books. This study followed this trend with students mentioning in the second survey that they noticed more students and teachers working together collaboratively due to the changes in the space more than checking out books and housing computers for accessing

information. As mentioned by Yanchus earlier in the study, libraries are transforming into unique working spaces for students and teachers beyond stacks of books (n.pag.).

Oldenburg believes that in order to create a third place setting, certain aesthetics must be in place such as warmth, familiar faces, and accessibility (“The Character of Third Places” section). Students use the third place library as a safe place to feel accepted and to find solace (Johnston and Bishop 4). Oldenburg mentions that when individuals find such aesthetics as warmth, familiar faces, and accessibility, they will place value on these places and keep returning (“The Character of Third Places” section). Approximately ninety-two percent [N = 13] of students who participated in this study agreed that the changes made in the school library allowed them to feel a sense of warmth when using the library. Furthermore, all students reported finding the library accessible and accommodating for their academic needs.

This study found that the increase of collaborative instruction between teachers and students occurred when the library space was furnished to invite collaboration and provided a welcoming environment. More teachers were booking the library space, as shown by an increase of visits between October 2015 and January 2016 on the Google form, to bring their classes down to the library than before the changes were made to the space. Furthermore, as shown with student comments from the group discussion, students felt like they could collaborate with each other using the library resources, such as tables and computers, in the newly designed space.

As seen in the group discussion, students enjoy a space that is not pretentious and one that feels different from their classroom walls. A library as third place that feels warm and

welcoming and has resources readily available to students and staff is a place students want to access as much as possible during the school day. With districts pushing teachers and librarians to prepare students with 21st century skills, studies and articles are displaying the rising trends for libraries to become more than walls with books inside. From forty-seven percent [N = 8] of students from survey one wanting a comfortable reading area to the increase of attendance in the library after the third place furniture was introduced, the impact of such library places is evident when librarians push to re-imagine how library places can be transformed into third places students want to visit.

Maintaining Value of a Third Place School Library

Libraries have always had value in societies as they held important documents concerning the history of the cultures that valued them (Grossman 105-106). When citizens value a meeting space, this space is then managed by those values (Elmborg 343). The student surveys, group discussion, and Google Form used in this study show that students access the library in various ways to meet their academic needs. They use the tables and chairs as meeting spots and to work on projects. They use the computers to access information when they do not have internet access at home. When comparing visit data before and after the changes were made in the library, the researcher estimated there were 1,600 more visits to the library to use its resources. As students use the library more frequently, the value of a third place library will continue to grow. Students and teachers view the library as the hub of the school where they can talk to each other and use available resources (Lin, Chen, and Chang 342).

Furthermore, students like to feel they can connect and identify with a library place they can call their own. When students see easy access to technology and comfortable furniture that welcomes collaboration and socialization, they will invest their time in this place (Mardis “Reflections” ii). From the group discussion, all students reported using the library to meet their academic needs. Most of the students [N = 13] reported they connected with the library because it did not feel too much like a classroom setting, with only desks and chairs, and the décor was cheerful and playful. Given this data, it is reasonable to assume students and teachers will continue to value this library and a third place will continue to develop in this setting.

Student Usage of a Third Place School Library

Data collected from this study show that students engaged with the playful décor and warmth they found in the third place library setting. This engagement allowed the students to use the library as a place to come and quietly read, work on homework, and collaborate on projects with classmates and teachers. In the group discussion, all fourteen students said they have used the library furniture to read and work on homework. Approximately ninety-two percent [N = 13] of students felt a sense of warmth when visiting the school library. Students commented from the group discussion that the furniture was not pretentious and, therefore, they felt they could use the furniture whenever it was available to them. This sense of connection shows the beginning of a third place library in this setting as students use the space to fit their personal needs. Students from the group discussion claim they accessed this library to work on posters for clubs and upcoming activities as well as utilize the library’s extended

hours, either before or after school, and to complete homework that required internet connection due to the fact they didn't have access to this resource at home.

Many students also used the library space for socialization time before school or when their class work was complete. Oldenburg mentions that a third place setting provides individuals with a chance to feel comfortable and to build relationships outside of home and work ("The Character of Third Places" section). Two students from the group discussion claimed that it is often hard to socialize during lunch and passing time in the hallways because of the volume of noise. However, the library provides comfortable furniture and a relaxing atmosphere for these students to socialize with friends and work on projects together due to the lower volume of noise compared to the cafeteria and hallways. Other students [N =12] in the group discussion commented the library setting gives them a relaxed atmosphere to talk with other teachers in the building. These students agreed the comfy furniture and relaxed setting allowed them to use this space to build relationships with teachers compared to a classroom setting that might not provide the same opportunities. Overall, third place theory is supported in this library due to students using the space for relaxing, academic needs, and relationship building with fellow students and teachers.

Academic Collaboration in a Third Place School Library

Collaboration can naturally occur once the third place library is valued and relationships are being built in this setting. Collaboration is the result of trusting, working relationships between two or more participants involved in shared thinking, planning, and instructing (Montiel-Overall 32). As tracked through the Google Form, the research estimated 1,600 more

visits to the library in November and December 2016 once the new furniture was added compared to October 2015 before the changes were made. The new library setting provided an area that was comfortable and encouraged collaboration and networking. Teachers often want a comfortable and convenient place to meet with colleagues or students (Montiel-Overall 45). All fourteen students from the group discussion reported they would rather collaborate with other students and teachers in the new third place library setting rather than their classrooms. They felt they would be able to successfully collaborate on a project with other students or teachers in the new school library space. One student commented she felt more creative during collaboration while using the new furniture and she felt her teacher acted more relaxed. All students felt the library was used more for collaboration after the new furniture was installed. Many researchers conclude that when a third place setting occurs in classrooms and libraries, students benefit academically because the comfortable environment is present for the students to share more knowledge (Moje et al. 67). With more teachers signing up to bring their classes to the library and third place beginning to occur, students benefit academically by observing teacher and librarian collaboration, problem solving techniques, and purposeful learning through technology and other resources.

Recommendations for Future Studies

Future studies could investigate educating students and staff before the design of a third place library in the school. This study could look at whether the success rate of a third place library could be more successful if students and staff were educated on third place theory and how this applies to today's libraries. A small number of students were briefly educated on

the characteristics of third place libraries during the group discussion after survey one. This may have improved the success of the third place theory in this particular middle school library since students have ownership in the changes implemented and understood the purpose behind those changes. If administrators, staff, and community leaders were brought in during a future study and educated on third place theory, results may have varied towards more support of the library as third place and possibly more funding given to implement the changes to the décor.

Conclusion

This study investigated the creation of third place in a middle school library setting and how this increased student usage of the library and academic collaboration for students and teachers. The data from the surveys and group discussion suggest that students liked the new décor that was placed in their library, and they felt comfortable in the library setting as it modeled third place theory. The data also show evidence that once the library was re-imaged based on third place theory, students noticed a significant increase in usage of the new furniture by all in the school community as well as many of their teachers signing up to use the new library space for collaboration and research. In addition, data from the group discussion suggest students preferred using a library that modeled third place theory rather than a library that does not follow these characteristics.

Overall, data from this study, as well as articles and research written by others, support the idea that libraries must keep up with patron needs by constantly reflecting on whether they are meeting those needs based on programming that is offered and the look and feel of their

library places. Oldenburg's theory of third places having a sense of warmth, accessibility and accommodation, playfulness, and approachableness models what successful 21st century library after. The librarian and other staff who support the theory in action make the third place theory successful. As studies have shown, individuals like coming to community places where they feel they belong and are able to build relationships with those around them while in those places. As librarians are looking to re-image their library places and programming, the décor is just an enticement to get patrons in the library doors. Third place will occur in this setting if patrons feel a sense of warmth from the librarians and staff and a sense of belonging. In a school library building relationships with staff and other students will help develop the skills needed for successful academic collaboration and development of 21st century information literacy skills.

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APPENDIX A

Student Survey #1

“Creating Third Space in Our Library”

1. If you could add furniture to our library, which kind of furniture would you add?
2. What makes you feel comfortable in a school library?
3. What is your favorite spot to read outside of school?
4. If you could choose one thing to add to the MRMS library, what would it be?
5. What else might be done to improve collaboration among students and teachers in the library?

APPENDIX B

Student Survey #2

“Creating Third Space in Our Library”

1. Do you like the furniture we added to the school library? Why or why not?
2. Do you feel comfortable in the MRMS school library? Why or why not?
3. Do you notice more students using the school library since we've added the new items?
4. If you could choose to change one thing about the MRMS library, what would it be?
5. Do you think collaboration has improved in the school library between students and teachers?

APPENDIX C

Group Discussion Questions

1. When you visit our school library, do you feel a sense of warmth? Feeling a sense of warmth in a space would include feeling comfortable, “a home away from home,” and cozy.
2. When you visit our school library, do you feel like the furniture is low profile? Is it plain enough in design so that it feels approachable and not pretentious? Pretentious means when something feels important or having dignity or feels fancy.
3. Do you feel the mood of the décor is playful and cheerful--not too much like a classroom?
4. Is the LMC accessible and accommodating for your academic needs? For instance, do you take advantage of extended hours and resources provided to you as a student? Do you use the tables and chairs to work on projects?
5. Do you feel you are able to build relationships with students and teachers while using the LMC?
6. Do you feel you would be able to successfully collaborate on a project with other students or teachers in the LMC?

APPENDIX D

Google Form Used to Track Student/Teacher Attendance and Collaboration Needs in the LMC



Attendance in the LMC for Nov. & Dec. 2015

This is a form used to track attendance and collaboration projects for Mrs. Pennington's research study.

* Required

Date *

Number of students using the LMC *

What are students and/or teachers using the LMC for? *

Submit

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

100%: You made it.

APPENDIX E

Parental Consent Form for Research Study

Ridge Readers Library Advisory Group Parental Consent FORM

This research is being done by Mrs. Tara Pennington, Library Media Specialist at Moreland Ridge Middle School. I am also an Educational Specialist student at the University of Central Missouri.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to help me understand what makes a comfortable environment for students in a library setting. I'm researching how students create a space in the library that promotes collaboration among students and teachers and sparks reading interest.

Request for Participation: I am inviting your child to participate in a study on what makes a comfortable environments for students in a library setting while promoting collaboration and reading interest. It is up to you and your child whether he/she would like to participate. If your child does not participate, he/she will not be penalized in any way. Your child can also decide to stop at any time without penalty. If your child does not wish to answer any of the questions, he/she may simply skip them. Your child may withdraw any time. If your child does not wish to do this, he/she can tell me before turning in the survey. Once your child turns it in, I will not know which one it is.

Exclusions: Your child must be at least 11 years of age to participate in this study with parent consent form signed and returned to Mrs. Pennington.

Description of Research Method: This study involves completing two short surveys and participating in a group discussion during Ridge Readers after data is collected from the surveys. The surveys will ask you about your child's age, gender, and grade. It will also ask questions regarding what makes the school library an exciting and comfortable place to visit and what ideas they might have to further collaboration among students and teachers. The first survey will take place in early November and the second survey two weeks later. This study will take about 30 minutes to finish. After your child is finished, I will explain the purpose of the study in more detail. Then your child will also have a chance to ask questions.

Privacy: All of the information I collect will be confidential. I will not record your child's name, student number, or any information that could be used to identify your child. I will also provide your child with a blank sheet of paper so that he/she can cover their responses as they write them down. This will prevent other research participants from seeing their answers. I will put a number on your child's survey and refer to that number when I use his/her data.

Explanation of Risks: The risks associated with participating in this study are similar to the risks of everyday life.

Explanation of Benefits: Your child will benefit from participating in this study by getting firsthand experience in a research study. They may also enjoy completing the survey as it will benefit the Moreland Ridge Middle School library.

Questions: If you have any questions about this study, please contact Mrs. Tara Pennington at tpennington@bssd.net or 816-874-3540. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Human Subjects Protection Program at (660) 543-4624.

If your child would like to participate, please sign a copy of this letter and return it to me. The other copy is for you to keep. I have read this letter and agree for my child to participate.

Signature: _____ Printed name: _____

Date: _____ Your child's name _____

Person obtaining consent: _____

APPENDIX F

Student Assent Form for Research Study

Ridge Readers Library Advisory Group STUDENT ASSENT FORM

This research is being done by Mrs. Tara Pennington, Library Media Specialist at Moreland Ridge Middle School. I am also an Educational Specialist student at the University of Central Missouri.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to help me understand what makes a comfortable environment for students in a library setting. I'm researching how students create a space in the library that promotes collaboration among students and teachers and sparks reading interest.

Request for Participation: I am inviting you to participate in a study on what makes a comfortable environments for students in a library setting while promoting collaboration and reading interest. It is up to you whether you would like to participate. If you decide not to participate, you will not be penalized in any way. You can also decide to stop at any time without penalty. If you do not wish to answer any of the questions, you may simply skip them. You may withdraw any time. If you wish to do this, please tell me before you turn in your materials. Once you turn in the materials, I will not know which survey is yours.

Exclusions: You must be at least 11 years of age to participate in this study with parent consent form signed and returned to Mrs. Pennington.

Description of Research Method: This study involves completing two short surveys, one at the beginning and the other at the end of this project. Also, you will participate in a group discussion during Ridge Readers after data is collected from the surveys. The surveys will ask you about your age, gender, and grade and enhancements you would like to see in the school library. This study will take about 30 minutes to finish. After you are finished, I will explain the purpose of the study in more detail. Then you will also have a chance to ask questions.

Privacy: All of the information I collect will be confidential. I will not record your name, student number, or any information that could be used to identify you. I will also provide you with a blank sheet of paper so that you can cover your responses as you write them down. This will prevent other research participants from seeing your answers. I will put a number on your survey and refer to that number when I use your data.

Explanation of Risks: The risks associated with participating in this study are similar to the risks of everyday life.

Explanation of Benefits: You will benefit from participating in this study by getting firsthand experience in a research study. They may also enjoy completing the survey as it will benefit the Moreland Ridge Middle School library.

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If you would like to participate, please sign a copy of this letter and return it to me along with a copy of the parental consent form signed by one of your parents (or guardian). The other copy is for you to keep.

I have read this letter and agree to participate.

Signature: _____ Printed name: _____

Date: _____

Person obtaining consent: _____

Student's Name: _____

APPENDIX G

Human Subjects Approval: November



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 Compliance: researchreview@ucmo.edu

11/20/2015

Tara Pennington

Dear Tara Pennington :

Your research project, 'Creating Third Space', was approved by the Human Subjects Review Committee on 11/20/2015. This approval is valid through 11/20/2016. Your informed consent is also approved until 11/20/2016.

Please note that you are required to notify the committee in writing of any changes in your research project and that you may not implement changes without prior approval of the committee. You must also notify the committee in writing of any change in the nature or the status of the risks of participating in this research project.

Should any adverse events occur in the course of your research (such as harm to a research participant), you must notify the committee in writing immediately. In the case of any adverse event, you are required to stop the research immediately unless stopping the research would cause more harm to the participants than continuing with it.

At the conclusion of your project, you will need to submit a completed Final/Renewal Report to this office via Blackboard. You must also submit the Final/Renewal Report if you wish to continue your research project beyond its initial expiration date.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Janice Putnam, Ph.D., RN
 Research Compliance Officer
 putnam@ucmo.edu

Protocol Number: 348

Equal Education and Employment Opportunity

APPENDIX H

Pictures of Furniture Purchased for Library



Club Chair (Demco)

(Images used with permission from Demco)



Loveseat (Demco)